CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FOURTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 August 1998, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom)

GE.98-63269 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 804th Plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

It is an honour for me, on behalf of the United Kingdom, to assume the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My country has been associated with the work of the Conference and it predecessors from the beginning and has played a constructive role in its deliberations. I am grateful for this opportunity, an opportunity which sadly eluded my predecessor, Michael Weston, to serve this Conference as your President. In assuming the Presidency, I must express my thanks to my predecessors, most recently, Ambassador Maimeskul of Ukraine, for their sterling efforts to direct the work of the Conference in a positive and forward looking manner. I should like also to take this opportunity of thanking the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who unfortunately cannot be with us today, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and their staff for their unstinting and invaluable support.

I took up my post in Geneva almost exactly one year ago, so that I have had 12 months to prepare myself for this role, unlike my predecessor but one, Ambassador Sungar of Turkey, who found himself catapulted into this seat as soon as he arrived in Geneva.

When I look back on the record of the very first plenary meeting I attended, on 21 August 1997, I reflect how fortunate I am compared with the then Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Mr. Goonetilleke, who assumed the Presidency that same day. Ambassador Goonetilleke had to report that the Conference had exhausted one whole year attempting to decide on its programme of work. Even after agreeing on the agenda, the Conference had failed to reach any decision on a specific item or items to be taken up for negotiation.

One year on, the picture looks rather more hopeful. On 26 March this year, the Conference took a decision, CD/1501, under the Presidency of Ambassador Al-Hussami of Syria, to establish an Ad Hoc Committee under agenda item 4 on negative security assurances, and to appoint six Special Coordinators. By virtue of the same decision, the presidency would pursue intensified consultations on appropriate methods and approaches for dealing with agenda item 1 entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" with the assistance of the incoming and outgoing Presidents. Subsequently, following a period of intensive consultations under the leadership of Ambassador Maimeskul of Ukraine, in which I was privileged to take part as a member of the Troika, the Conference adopted, on 11 August, a decision (CD/1547) to establish, under item 1 of our agenda, an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. At the same time the Conference heard a statement by the then President confirming that the intensive consultations envisaged in CD/1501 for dealing with agenda item 1 would continue. I have already conducted one informal open-ended consultation on agenda item 1 in accordance with that commitment. And in the few days remaining of this session, I stand ready to continue these consultations on agenda item 1 with the Troika. It would be my firm intention to report on the

(The President)

outcome of these consultations before the end of the session. These developments mean that, in contrast to last year, the Conference will have something to show for the efforts which we have collectively made since the start of the year.

I have on my list of speakers for today, the representative of Poland. Once we have exhausted the list of speakers, I intend to proceed to the appointment of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, which we established on 11 August 1998 in decision CD/1547. I also intend to invite the Conference to take action on the request by Ghana to participate in the work of the Conference during this session as an Observer.

I should now like to give the floor to the first speaker on my list, Ambassador Jakubowski of Poland.

Mr. JAKUBOWSKI (Poland): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, a distinguished representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. As the Conference proceeds, at long last, to substantive work on items covered by its work programme, including agenda item 1, it is comforting to know that the stewardship of the CD is in the hands of a diplomat whose country, as it follows from the Strategic Defence Review, is about to make a significant and most welcome contribution to nuclear arms control and disarmament. You can rely on the Polish delegation for its full and constructive cooperation in the discharge of your important mandate.

I should also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessors, the distinguished representatives of Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Ukraine for their leadership and dedication in steering the CD since the beginning of its current session.

I wish to address special felicitations to Ambassador Mykola Maimeskul, whose diplomatic skill, tenacity and courtesy won him the crowning success of his presidency: the consensus decision to establish the FMCT Ad Hoc Committee. I am happy to join other members of the CD in the welcome they extended to Ambassador Dragonov of Bulgaria. I look forward to close cooperation with him in the days and months to come.

My greetings go also to the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference, His Excellency, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, as well as the members of the Secretariat staff.

Before I turn to the substance of my statement, I should like to convey to the distinguished representative of the United States and his delegation, through you, our heart-felt sympathy in connection with the recent outrageous terrorist attacks against United States diplomatic posts in Kenya and Tanzania. We extend our condolences to all the families of the victims of these barbarous acts and we commiserate with them. The perpetrators of these hideous crimes must not escape justice if the efforts of the international community to eradicate the scourge of terrorism are to succeed.

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

Poland welcomes with satisfaction and relief the fact that the CD has been finally able to agree on a meaningful work programme and to make important headway in its implementation. We welcome, in particular, the historic breakthrough decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee and proceed to FMCT negotiations, a step that has been overdue since the dawn of the nuclear age. The landmark decision was possible owing to the collective wisdom of the Conference on Disarmament and to the flexibility and a remarkable spirit of accommodation on the part of all its members. The able and consistent leadership provided since the inception of the current session by the successive presidency, Troikas has also been a factor that has made all the difference.

Poland is encouraged by the re-establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on NSA and by the appointment of Special Coordinators on other issues, both substantive and CD reform-oriented. The consensus decisions made in that regard and the commendable manner in which all appointees have been acquitting themselves of their demanding mandates, give the Conference on Disarmament a new lease on life. We trust, above all, that these accomplishments will lay a firm ground for our target-oriented work from the outset of the CD session in 1999 and in the years to come.

The sense of renewed purpose sharply contrasts with the mood that has prevailed in the CD until recently. The prolonged impasse frequently led many to wonder what, if any, practical chances of meaningful work were left to the Conference on Disarmament. Such doubts grew painfully relevant in the wake of the upheaval which worldwide security environment suffered as a result of the deplorable horizontal proliferation of nuclear-weapons in South Asia.

For its part, Poland has been of the opinion all along that, notwithstanding or rather, because of the damage inflicted on the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the Conference on Disarmament must discharge its mandate with renewed determination and a sense of urgency, greater and more immediate than ever.

Therefore, the Government of Poland has received with satisfaction Pakistan's far-sighted decision "to support the immediate commencement of negotiations on a non-discriminatory, universal and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices". We are also gratified with India's declared readiness to participate in such a negotiating process in a constructive spirit. Now that the collective wisdom of the Conference on Disarmament has made it possible to reach a milestone decision on an issue overdue since the dawn as I said, of the nuclear age, nothing should stay in the way of launching an expeditious negotiating process. A repeat of the 1995 controversies over the name of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee is clearly not acceptable. Who knows, perhaps the Ad Hoc Committee, established under the Shannon mandate in 1995, could have proceeded to productive negotiations to work out an important accord, were it not for the secondary, technical considerations raised at the time. Perhaps, as a result, the recent grave damage to the non-proliferation regime could have been avoided. Who knows?

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

The establishment of the FMCT Ad Hoc Committee makes it possible for the CD to act as required in accordance with the "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament". The instrument which we shall seek will be the next logical step after the conclusion of the CTBT. Its achievement will be essential for the full realization and effective implementation of article VI of the NPT. This implies - and my delegation has no doubts about it - that in the future negotiating process equal and balanced attention needs to be paid to the non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament aspects of the future accord. It could not be otherwise. A universally applicable FMCT will represent an important act of self-denial both for the nuclear "haves" and for the "have-nots". It is difficult to see, therefore, why consent to give and take negotiations on an FMCT should be considered a gesture calling for reciprocation or deserving a reward. Matters of supreme importance for the fate of mankind are not fit for "gestures". After all, what we engage in is not a diplomatic quadrille.

The Polish delegation is determined to make a constructive contribution to the intensive consultation process which the presidency, in accordance with the terms of the decision contained in CD/1501, shall pursue, seeking the views of members on appropriate methods and approaches for dealing with agenda item 1, taking into account all relevant proposals and views. We welcome the open-ended informal consultations on agenda item 1. In this regard we need to take a close look at inter alia, the relevant proposals made by Belgium, South Africa and other delegations in regard to the most appropriate approach open to us.

In Poland's view, constructive work must not be put off, especially in those areas where it may, in time, result in meaningful arms control and disarmament accords. Apart from an FMCT, we believe this is also the case with an antipersonnel landmine (APL) transfer ban. The APL ban is an issue to which Poland attaches priority importance. Having signed the Ottawa Convention and having high regard for its humanitarian norm-setting, we believe that constructive work of the CD on a global APL transfer ban would be in the direct interest of universalization of the Ottawa Convention.

Many delegations have already recognized the potential of the CD in regard to an APL transfer ban. First of all, it offers a unique chance of involving major producers and exporters of APL who are not now parties to the Ottawa Convention. The significance of this fact does not elude an ever greater number of delegations. Many of them are now in direct contact with their capitals and are awaiting instructions. The momentum is, therefore, clear and it must not be lost. Human lives are also at stake in an APL transfer. We must not abdicate our responsibility if those lives could be saved. Therefore ways must be found for the Special Coordinator to continue his endeavours in 1999. Indeed, we commend Ambassador Campbell of Australia for the imagination, skill and determination with which he has been pursuing his mandate, and we are looking forward to his report and conclusions.

Poland welcomes the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear Weapon States Against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons (NSA). We congratulate

(Mr. Jakubowski, Poland)

Ambassador Antonio de Icaza, the distinguished representative of Mexico, on his appointment as Chairman of the Committee. We are confident that the well-structured and target-oriented work which he has already undertaken in regard to NSA will in due time result in identifying practical, legally-binding arrangements that are of global scope. In this respect we need to build on the Committee's past work as well as the developments which have taken place since then. Among them stand out: Security Council resolution 984 (1995) and the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference with its view of a direct relationship between NSA and adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In concluding, I should like to restate my Government's gratification at the landmark decisions which the Conference on Disarmament has taken at its current session. We extend to all appointees our congratulations and wish them well. At the same time we are aware that, in order to succeed, they will need not only our good wishes but, above all, our sustained support, flexibility and readiness to seek workable compromises. I reiterate, there is no time to be lost on procedural or formal disputes. Constructive work must no longer be put off where it may, in due time, result in constructive negotiations and meaningful accords. My delegation is willing and ready to act accordingly and make its active contribution to our common endeavours.

With your indulgence, let me finally put on record my Government's satisfaction at the recent accession of Brazil to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as well as its ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. We commend Brazil for its momentous decision and for acting as it preaches.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Poland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

Mr. OYUNGI (Kenya): Since it is the first time that I am taking the floor, I would like to say on behalf of my delegation that we are happy to have you in the chair, and we are sure that we are going to benefit from your skills and experience during your tenure of the Presidency. Similarly, I wish to pay gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Mykola Maimeskul, who steered our proceedings with commendable skill.

I have taken the floor really to express appreciation for the kind words of sympathy that have been pronounced by Ambassador Krzysztof Jakubowski concerning the recent terrorist attacks in Kenya and neighbouring Tanzania. I wish to say that at such times of difficulty and pain it is really comforting to receive such words of sympathy.

The PRESIDENT: I am very grateful to the distinguished representative for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would only add that as a representative of a nation which has known its share of terrorist atrocities, including very recently, I very much sympathize with the distinguished representative.

Mr. GREY (United States of America): Just to second the remarks made by the Kenyan representative to the Polish representative.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador Grey. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? That does not appear to be the case.

Dear colleagues, I am happy to be able to report to you that the intensive consultations that have been held on the chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices have been concluded, and the candidature of Ambassador Mark Moher of Canada enjoys consensus in the Conference. May I take it that the Conference decides to appoint Ambassador Moher of Canada for the post of Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices for the current session?

It was so decided.

I should like, on behalf of all of us, and on my own account, to extend to Ambassador Moher our congratulations and to wish him every success in launching the negotiating process on this very important issue.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): It would be both inappropriate and unwise of me not to express the appreciation of Canada for the honour that the Conference has just paid to the country I am honoured to represent. Certainly, anyone who doubted the courage of the CD should not doubt any longer. Between having decided to set up an Ad Hoc Committee and then to put Canada in the chair is confirmation that there is more than enough courage in this room. That does open the way for me to make a couple of comments, if I may.

First, there is no question but that Canada as Canada has got very clear views with regard to the treaty that we all hope to negotiate: But Canada, as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, undertakes and commits itself to behave as a chairman should that is, in a neutral way, and certainly the Canadian chair will do its best to move the work of the Committee forward, but do so in a way sensitive to the members of the Conference and of the Ad Hoc Committee. I personally see the nomination of Canada, and of myself for that task, as recognition that we will, in fact, behave in that appropriate way.

The immediate challenge that we have, as you well know, given your own responsibilities is, in the very brief period of time available before the end of this year's session, to try to reconcile two perspectives, if I can put it that way. The first perspective is to at least begin the work of the Ad Hoc Committee this year. Secondly, to make sure that in beginning our deliberations, we begin those deliberations deliberately. And certainly, what I will want to do is to consult carefully with members of the Conference as to how to reconcile those two. But I would like to signal now, given the pressure of time, that in consultations with the secretariat, it has emerged that there really appear to be only two available time periods during which the Committee could meet. One would be on Friday morning, 28 August, and the other on Tuesday afternoon, 1 September. So I think it is only appropriate,

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

at this point, just to flag that those are the two opportunities, and I hope that the consultations I will be undertaking immediately will enable us to take advantage of those time periods. I thank you again, Mr. President, and I thank all members of this Conference.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): First of all, may I extend my congratulations to you. It is a pleasure for France to see your country, and you, taking over the presidency of the Conference at a time which, furthermore, seems both promising and decisive. And in my congratulations and thanks I would not like to forget the Ambassador of Ukraine, who handed over the baton to you after doing some remarkable work in his remarkable French.

We have just drawn the consequences of the decision adopted on 11 August. The appointment of the Ambassador of Canada as chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices has today really kicked off negotiations on the cut-off. I take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Moher and assure him of the trust and cooperation of my delegation.

Today, then, there begins the materialization of the long-standing commitment that was first made here and then, for those of us who are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, confirmed in the 1995 decision on principles and objectives. After the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the conclusion of a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile materials will be a further complementary and decisive step in the implementation of article VI of the NPT and the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons decided on in 1995. The treaty that we are going to start elaborating will contribute both to the non-proliferation and to nuclear disarmament. In this latter respect, the rhetoric that still sometimes seeks to deny the contribution the treaty could make to that undertaking will soon be refuted by the facts, as it has already been by the name of the Committee and by its establishment under item 1 on our agenda, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". But words are all very well - the work has not yet begun.

As the Ambassador of Canada just said, the Committee has very little time to get to grips with its work between now and the end of the session. My country would really like to see it convened as soon as the timetable of which Ambassador Moher reminded us. Also, France will be prepared, if others agree, to embark if necessary on inter-sessional work in order to clear as far as possible the tricky ground on which we are going to have to venture. We would also hope that - without, of course, derogating from the rules of procedure of our Conference, which will in any case require us to take a new decision at the 1999 session - we shall all be able to agree before the end of the present session to recommend the immediate re-establishment of the Committee when the session opens at the end of January next year.

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

We are, naturally, aware of the problems the negotiations will entail for the nuclear Powers and, more so perhaps then for the others, for a country like ours. France, as you know, has cut its capacity to the bare minimum in response to the strategic context. It has only its own forces to rely on, but we shall no more evade our commitment tomorrow than we did in the past, for we are convinced of the importance and renewed topicality of this undertaking. We are no less aware that this subject does not exhaust the issue of nuclear disarmament, whether that disarmament be unilateral, bilateral or conducted in the context of the Conference on Disarmament. We have in mind all the proposals which have been put before the Conference and the ideas which are being discussed elsewhere. The troika mechanism that we instituted this March should, we hope, enable the freest possible discussion of these other issues and that is why we would like it to be maintained for this year and, if necessary, that is to say if nothing new comes up in the meantime or, for the Latinists, rebus sic stantibus, re-established at the beginning of 1999.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Ambassador of France for her statement and for her kind words to the Chair.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the Egyptian delegation I would like to welcome you and congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament at this last stage of the session, particularly since you represent the United Kingdom, which has firm ties of friendship and cooperation with Egypt. We are confident that your wide experience and your outstanding diplomatic skills will assist your successful management of the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to Ambassador Maimeskul, the Permanent Representative of the Ukraine, for his unceasing efforts throughout his presidency of the Conference, which resulted in the adoption of a decision on the establishment of an ad hoc committee under agenda item 1 entitled the "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament" for negotiating a prohibition on the production of fissile materials, as reflected in CD/1547.

With the adoption of the decision to appoint Ambassador Moher, the Permanent Representative of Canada, to chair the Ad Hoc Committee, I should like to stress the considerations articulated in the statement of the Egyptian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament on 11 August 1998 following the adoption of the decision to establish the Ad Hoc Committee, as well as the statement of the President which accompanied the decision.

The most important of these considerations was that the proposed treaty should represent a nuclear disarmament measure and not simply a measure to prohibit the production of fissile material. It is imperative that the scope of the treaty should include the stockpile of fissile material and not just future production, and thus pursue the commitment to the objective of nuclear disarmament.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the informal consultations on agenda item 1 of the Conference on Disarmament to which you issued an invitation on the afternoon of yesterday, 19 August 1998. These consultations are a successful means of building a consensus and mutual trust in order to assist the CD to reach agreement on ways and means of negotiating the various nuclear disarmament issues within the context of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, particularly since this question is regarded by the international community as the top priority of disarmament as reflected in resolutions of the special session on disarmament - SSOD I. We are quite sure that the consultations which you will be pursuing in conjunction with the other two members of the presidential troika will help to achieve this goal.

We have long been calling for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in order to save mankind from their disaster. President Hosni Mubarak's initiative to free the Middle East of such weapons and his call to free the world of nuclear weapons both fall within that context. The international community has succeeded in concluding a convention to prohibit biological weapons and a convention to prohibit chemical weapons. It only remains for nuclear weapons to be prohibited and eliminated.

On that basis and with a view to assisting you to pursue those consultations to negotiate nuclear disarmament and to also assisting other delegations to set forth their national positions - as I said during the informal consultations which took place yesterday - I would today like to submit a request through you for the secretariat of the CD to combine all the major documents on nuclear disarmament in a single document for ease of reference. I refer in particular, for instance, to: the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice given in 1996; the programme of action for nuclear disarmament presented by 28 States members of the Group of 21 on 7 August 1996; resolution 14/1996 of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on international peace and security as a prerequisite for the enjoyment of human rights; the draft mandate officially submitted by the Egyptian delegation on 1 April 1997 for the establishment of a committee for nuclear disarmament; the draft mandate presented by the delegations of 26 States on 12 June 1997 for the establishment of that committee; and the joint statement of 9 June 1998 issued by eight Ministers for Foreign Affairs, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, on a nuclear-weapon-free world, which was presented on their behalf by the Swedish Ambassador to the CD on 11 June 1998. In addition are the further nuclear disarmament initiatives issued in various documents following their presentation to the CD by other countries. These are examples of some of the main proposals and documents which we hope that the secretariat will combine in a single document for the Conference so they can be built upon in the consultations during the next stage of disarmament, particularly following the Conference's adoption on 11 August of a resolution for the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material. We are confident that the secretariat will discharge this task expeditiously and with its usual efficiency.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to thank the Ambassador of Egypt for his statement and for the kind remarks addressed to the Chair. As no one else has requested the floor, I should like to move on to the action I announced at the beginning of the plenary, namely, to take up for decision the request from the Republic of Ghana to participate in the work of the Conference during this session as an Observer. This request is contained in document CD/WP.498, which is before you. May I take it that this request is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The secretariat has circulated, at my request, a tentative timetable of meetings for the period 24-28 August 1998. This timetable was prepared in consultation with the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Guarantees, the newly-appointed Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and the Special Coordinators. In this respect, I should like to draw your attention to the fact that on Thursday, 27 August 1998, an informal plenary meeting has been scheduled immediately following the regular plenary meeting in order to start our consideration of the draft annual report to the United Nations General Assembly. The draft annual report, to be contained in document CD/WP.497, will be available in delegations' boxes in all official languages by Tuesday, 25 August 1998. As is customary, this timetable is merely indicative and subject to change, if necessary. On this understanding, may I assume that the timetable is acceptable?

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): The Egyptian delegation has no objection to adoption of the meetings schedule submitted for next week. I would, however, like to make a couple of comments. The first is that I am obliged to recall the title of the committee established to deal with the prohibition of the production of fissile materials. We should maintain the title as adopted in the CD's decision of 11 August, which does not preclude the further addition of "to negotiate ...", etcetera. We must therefore respect the title which we adopted for this committee ... Ad Hoc Committee under item so and so, etcetera. Secondly, the Egyptian delegation wonders whether it might be possible to use the afternoon of Tuesday, 25 August, to convene a meeting of that committee, with the further possibility of convening again on Wednesday, 26 August, following the presidential consultations to take place next week as you arranged yesterday at 4 p.m. The reason is that we have an important commitment to consultations on Friday, 28 August. If it is possible to introduce this amendment, the Egyptian delegation is ready to go along with the schedule, subject to amendment of the title of the committee to that adopted by the Conference. Thank you.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, Ambassador. I understand South Africa has asked for the floor. Does this relate to the same item?

Mr. GOOSEN (South Africa): Mr. President, yesterday when I spoke I thought I would not be speaking in a formal plenary under your presidency and indicated at that time how pleased we were to see you take over the presidency. We are now in a formal sitting and I wish to repeat the remarks,

(Mr. Goosen, South Africa)

without going into them word by word, of the welcome that my delegation extended to you yesterday and also the thanks that we conveyed to the distinguished Ambassador of the Ukraine and yourself.

I would join the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt in the concern that he has expressed with regard to the description of the Ad Hoc Committee which is contained in the informal paper on the indicative timetable of meetings. As we know, the whole issue of the scope of this treaty is under discussion and will be a feature of the negotiations that are to be conducted in this Ad Hoc Committee, and we would hope that the title which is given to the Ad Hoc Committee does not prejudge the negotiations which are to take place in accordance with the Shannon Report and the mandate contained therein. So, I wonder, Mr. President, if you could give some thought to that issue, which I think is a similar issue to the one which the distinguished Ambassador of Egypt has just raised and to see whether it is possible to address that point - either that, which I think goes a little bit further than the Egyptian Ambassador went, or we need to come to a very clear understanding at this point in time that the title which is given to this Ad Hoc Committee in no way prejudges the outcome of the negotiations which are to take place or the scope of those negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: Let me try and address the first point first of all. The informal paper which is before us is precisely that. It is a guide to delegations of the meetings which are contemplated for the week immediately ahead. In no sense, according to my reading of the paper, does it in any way prejudge, forecast or pre-empt the outcome of the discussions which might take place in the Ad Hoc Committees concerned. I would only note that no one has so far objected to the use of the shorthand "Ad Hoc Committee on Negative Security Assurances", which falls somewhat short of the full title of that Committee, which I could read to you, if I had it in front of me. Yes, "Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons". I quite take the points made by the Ambassador of Egypt and by the representative of South Africa, but I would equally ask them to accept my assurance that the use of what I would regard as "informal shorthand" in no way prejudices the outcome of the negotiations which we have commenced in the case of the NSA Committee and what we are about to commence under Ambassador Moher's chairmanship in the Ad Hoc Committee which was set up under decision CD/1547.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, as you are aware, this issue was one of the reasons for the CD's delay in adopting a decision on the establishment of the Committee. My delegation maintains the view that the title contained in the decision establishing the Committee should be used, in which case a reference can be made to the number of the decision.

The PRESIDENT: In fact, just for the sake of clarification, would you be satisfied, for your purposes, with a reference to the number of the decision? I feel fairly confident that we should be able to resolve something with the good offices of the secretariat, which would be acceptable to all delegates. The Ambassador of France has asked for the floor. Madam.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Naturally, Sir, we are all aware that this is an informal document, but for reasons of principle I support the request from the Ambassador of Egypt.

Mr. ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran): Just yesterday our Ambassador conveyed our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency and we are glad to see you presiding over our discussions.

I have taken the floor to support what has been put forward by our distinguished colleague from Egypt because it is very important that we keep the title as it is. It is something that we have already agreed.

The PRESIDENT: Would the following title of this item be acceptable to the Conference? I am referring to the item currently shown under 28 August: "Ad Hoc Committee established under decision CD/1547 on the prohibition of the production, etc."

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): Mr. President, I am grateful to you for having tried to find an acceptable title. We should not change the title, but at the end of the title, if you wish, you can add the number of the decision, CD/1507, and we stick to the title. The title can be stored in the computer and there will be no difficulty in writing two lines as the title of the Ad Hoc Committee, and you can, at the end, add "CD decision 1507".

The PRESIDENT: I think that, rather than delay the Conference any longer, I will take this under advisement and discuss it with those most concerned and, indeed, the incoming Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. GOOSEN (South Africa): It is not often that I get the opportunity to take the wind out of your sails in that fashion. I certainly would go along with your suggestion that you take it under advisement and discuss it with the people that are most concerned about the issue. I would just make two quick points, which you can take up in your advisement, and that is, firstly, that I do not think that there is a comparison here between "negative security assurances" as a title and the title of this Ad Hoc Committee. "Negative security assurances" is a generally accepted shorthand for the issue that that deals with by the international community. The issue of a fissile material treaty is, of course, one where we are struggling to reach agreement on what we are going to be doing. So to try and weigh the one against the other I think is not quite the way to go. Secondly, the issue of scope here is a very significant issue and not a minor one. It is initially going to be the most important issue in these negotiations, and you will, I hope, as I also hope our colleagues around these tables here will understand the sensitivities that go to this point. This is not purely to give you an interesting first day in the presidency. I think we would seek to see a reference to the agenda item in this title, and of course, we are going to try to keep it short. We do not want a page just to get the title down on the Ad Hoc Committee. We would be quite happy to have reference to the agenda item, to the decision, there. Otherwise, we can really go down to shorthand and say "Ad Hoc Committee on the negotiations for a treaty related to fissile material" - that would really be shorthand. We could really cut down on quite

(Mr. Goosen, South Africa)

a lot of the material that is there. But I think we need to come up with a neutral point, either a neutral terminology or otherwise, a terminology which has the necessary references to cover everybody's point. I am very concerned at any attempt to prejudge this issue.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt): I am sorry, Mr. President, to have asked for the floor again. I think we are grateful to you for the good will you have demonstrated, but still, I think there is no objection to keeping, or rather we cannot alter, a decision which we have taken. We have to maintain the title which we have agreed to for this Ad Hoc Committee. I think that at any consultation which takes place between you and me and others I will insist on that: we stick to our decision, the title which we have taken to our decision. But I do not mind if you wish to add at the end "decision CD/1507". This was the subject of long consultations until we were able to reach that decision. I think that trying to put another title on it is unacceptable to my delegation.

The PRESIDENT: Having sat close to you as we negotiated the title, I am fully aware of the strength of your views on the subject, but I am grateful to you for entrusting the task of resolving this to me. I will undertake to do so in a way which commands the respect and the consensus of the whole Conference.

Could I turn to the second point which you raised, Ambassador, which was, as I understood it, to suggest that the meeting proposed for Friday, 28 August, should, if at all possible be brought forward to Tuesday, 25 August, on the grounds that a number of delegations have important commitments on Friday, 28 August. Is that a correct understanding of your proposal, Tuesday, 25, or Wednesday, 26 August? Again, I think I must appeal to the incoming Chairman, who has not yet been able to undertake any consultations whatsoever on this subject.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Mr. President, you have anticipated my comment. Several delegations have expressed privately some concerns about an earlier meeting because of other obligations and so on. I appreciate very much the suggestion made by the Ambassador of Egypt because it certainly addresses one of the concerns that I flagged earlier, which is the lack of time available for us to get under way. But I think, having taken note of the suggestion by Ambassador Zahran, it is better at this point for us to be able to consult informally as to what is acceptable, rather than getting into an extended discussion here of competing agendas. I know there are some people who feel that early next week is very difficult for their delegations.

The PRESIDENT: That seems to me to be an entirely sensible comment. Could I try a procedural suggestion, which would be that we remove the item shown on Friday, 28 August, from the indicative timetable. That would solve two problems. It gives me a little bit longer to sort out the nomenclature to be used for the Committee, but on the understanding that when the Chairman of the Committee in question has completed his consultations, he would make a

(The President)

proposal in the usual way through the secretariat for the convening of a meeting of the Committee. On that basis, can we agree the tentative timetable of meetings scheduled to be held during the period 24-28 August?

It was so decided.

This concludes our business for today. I am grateful to you for letting me have a relatively soft landing. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 27 August 1998, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.